

WE ARE ALL WEST VIRGINIA

A Civics Education Program

By
Secretary of State
Natalie E. Tennant

I have graduated high school, what comes next?

For many of you, the answer to this question is “going to college” or “entering the military.” You will soon be faced with many decisions to make and forms to complete. Be sure to include “**Register to Vote**” and/or “**Apply for an Absentee Ballot**” on your list of things to do!

College

- If you are heading off to college, you may choose to ***register to vote at your new college residence address*** and ***vote in-person or by other means***. Please be sure to check with the local voter registration office to make sure your state allows you to register at a dorm, if that is where you will be living. Dorm residences are allowed in West Virginia (and most other states), but it is advisable to check in advance. You can normally register to vote as soon as you move into your new residence. Again, check with your local voter registration office for special requirements.



Once you have registered at a new address, make sure you know the rules for changing your address since students often change residence at least once during their college years. Every state that requires voter registration will accept the **national mail voter registration form** available at: http://www.eac.gov/voter_resources/register_to_vote.aspx. States have many voting options including early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, permanent absentee voting, vote centers and more. More information may be found at your state’s main election website. Search under “Secretary of State” or “State Board of Elections.”

- To bypass these issues, you may choose to ***register to vote at your “home” address*** and ***vote by absentee ballot***. Students in West Virginia may register to vote while 17 years old as long as they will be 18 by the date of the next general election (17 year olds may not vote in special or municipal elections). 17 year-olds may vote in intervening primary elections. Voters must register at least 21 days prior to the election in which they intend to vote. A student that has moved out of his or her “home” locality may request an absentee ballot up to 84 days prior to the election in which s/he wishes to vote, but no later than six days before the election. The **absentee ballot application** may be downloaded from the Secretary of State’s website at www.wvsos.com. Applications may be submitted to the county clerk of the voter’s county of residence by mail, by fax, or as an attachment

to an e-mail. County Clerk contact information may also be found at the Secretary of State's website.

Military

- If your future plans include enlisting in one of the uniformed services, you will have special opportunities for **voter registration** and **absentee voting**. Members of the Uniformed Services, which include all branches of the U. S. Military, may register to vote and request an absentee ballot using a **Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)**. This form may be downloaded at the Federal Voting Assistance Program's website at www.fvap.gov. Service members may register to vote at their "home" address or at a residence address established at a location where they are stationed. If a new residence is established, the voter may not register at a previous address unless s/he has returned to that address and re-established residency.



Military personnel are encouraged to complete a new FPCA at the beginning of each calendar year. The form may serve as an absentee ballot request for all* elections held throughout the year. West Virginia voters should include "party affiliation" information on the completed form in order to receive ballots for any primary elections held during the year. (*Note – a separate absentee ballot application is required for municipal elections, if applicable.)

Each military unit is required to have a designated Voting Assistance Officer (VAO). The VAO should be able to provide assistance to service members wishing to register to vote or apply for an absentee ballot. Military voters should also familiarize themselves with the **Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB)** available at <http://www.fvap.gov/resources/media/fwab.pdf>. If a voter has requested an absentee ballot but it does not arrive in a timely fashion, s/he may cast a ballot using the FWAB by writing in selections for offices or questions on the ballot.

West Virginia has established itself as a leader in voting services for Uniformed Services voters. The State has tested online voting and has participated in an electronic ballot-delivery pilot program with the FVAP and the department of Defense. Voters are encouraged to check the Secretary of State's website at www.wvsos.com for the latest developments in voting options for Uniformed Services voters.

Provided by:
West Virginia Secretary of State
Natalie E. Tennant
Building 1, Suite 157-K
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305



Telephone: 304-558-6000
Toll Free: 1-866-767-8683
Fax: 304-558-8386
www.wvsos.com
www.facebook.com/wvsos